



5 December 2005



## Holiday Season Safety

1. The upcoming holidays are a traditional time for gathering with family and friends to celebrate and share the joy of the season. For those of you who are not deployed, I ask that you use this time to enjoy some well-deserved rest and relaxation. Please keep in mind the families of deployed Soldiers, and those who will be alone over the holidays.
2. As you relax this holiday season, do not let down your guard; always remain vigilant in terms of safety. USAREUR was just recognized by the Army as the leading MACOM in accident prevention and reduction because of you. While we have had far too many accidental tragedies, because of your efforts, there are very likely Soldiers, civilians, and family members alive and well who, at least statistically, might have otherwise lost their lives or been seriously injured. Thank you.
3. This time of year can be deadly, and the month of December is particularly dangerous. Approach the season as you would any mission: plan ahead, conduct composite risk management, and execute to standard. Leaders and supervisors, engage your Soldiers with *Under the Oak Tree* counseling to help them identify and mitigate the hazards associated with this time of year. Instill in them the importance of individual responsibility, and let them know that the choices they make affect not only themselves, but their family, friends, and coworkers.
4. I have challenged everyone to take an active role in promoting safety and reducing hazards. Despite our efforts and the awards we have received, we have recently had a dramatic increase in the number of Soldiers lost to needless and tragic accidents. We must increase our efforts to prevent further losses. As I noted above, involvement of first-line supervisors and *Under the Oak Tree* counseling are key to accident prevention. In addition, I ask leaders to “think outside the box” and use innovative approaches to challenge the mindset of our Soldiers. We must ensure they understand their responsibilities for taking care of themselves and their comrades in arms. This camaraderie and trust in one another provide the foundation for success.
5. Winter weather in Europe is extremely hazardous. Fewer hours of daylight, black ice, fog, and snow, combined with roads crowded with holiday travelers, create dangerous driving conditions. Preparation is one of the keys to reducing these hazards. AAFES-Eur is offering free winter safety inspections of U.S. Forces-plated vehicles. Take advantage of this opportunity to ensure that your vehicle is ready for the challenges of winter driving. In addition, remember to check road conditions before departing on trips, and always drive defensively.

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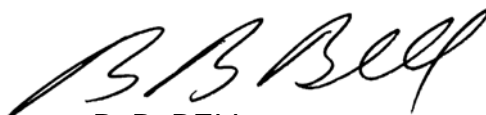
6. Winter sports and recreation activities create additional risks to Soldiers, civilians, and family members, particularly those who are not conditioned for the sport. Overconfidence and lack of preparation are the leading causes of winter sports-related accidents. Do not allow yourself to become a casualty over the holidays. You can significantly reduce risks by using the proper equipment, conditioning yourself, and taking lessons in your chosen sport.

7. This time of year also increases the risk of household fires. Unattended cooking, candles, Christmas trees, holiday lights, and flammable decorations all are potential causes of fire. The effect of these fires is measured not only by the renovation costs and the inconvenience to the occupants, but the inherent loss of household goods. Do not allow your holiday celebration to turn into a tragedy. Have a fire plan in place and rehearse it with your entire family. Know where the fire extinguishers are located and how to use them. Never leave cooking or candles unattended and never overload electrical outlets.

8. In addition to being hazardous, the holiday season can be especially stressful, particularly during this time of war. Deployments and pending deployments add to stress, which in turn can lead to spouse abuse and other forms of domestic violence. Leaders must engage with their subordinates to help minimize stress and let them know that they care. Leaders must also be able to recognize the signs of depression and suicidal behavior, and get counseling for those who need help.

9. I salute all members of the Army in Europe family for the fine work they perform every day. Thank you for your continued sacrifices and dedicated service to our Nation, in war and in garrison. With your continued commitment and sincere concern for the welfare of one another, we can all enjoy a safe and festive holiday season.

10. Ensure that this safety alert is given the widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards. I want first-line leaders to cover in detail and execute *Under the Oak Tree* counseling regarding all the subjects above. Let's all make a personal commitment to *No Loss of Life*. By taking care of one another, we can all continue to execute with excellence Any Mission, Anywhere.



B. B. BELL  
General, US Army  
Commanding



**ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!**